

ONLY STRENGTH WILL WIN THE PEACE

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TESTIMONY

OF

HON. BERNARD M. BARUCH

BEFORE THE

PREPAREDNESS INVESTIGATING SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

ON

MAY 28, 1952



PRESENTED BY MR. MORSE (FOR HIMSELF AND  
MR. JOHNSON OF TEXAS)

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TESTIMONY OF BERNARD M. BARUCH BEFORE THE PREPAREDNESS  
INVESTIGATING SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES AT WASHINGTON, D. C., WEDNESDAY, MAY 28,  
1952, AT 10 A. M.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you. As your chairman stated in his letter inviting me here, I have had no part in administering the defense program but if my thoughts can be of assistance to you, I am happy to offer them.

There are two enormously important questions before this committee:

1. Is it safe to be slowing our defense effort or should we actually be pressing to do more to make peace secure?
2. Is the defense effort which has been undertaken being carried out wastefully or efficiently, with necessary consideration of the soundness of our economy?

My own answers to these two questions can be summarized as follows: I do not think that the huge sums which have been appropriated for defense are being expended as economically and effectively as they should be. Later I will make some specific recommendations for correcting this situation. However, any budget cuts that are made must not reduce our fighting strength—in men or in weapons. Far from slowing down, our security requires that we step up our defenses both in speed and scale—if the peace is to be won.

### *Playing politics with defense*

Ours is a fearful dilemma. Because we are not in all-out war, with the whole globe aflame, it is tempting to nibble at the defense budget, to lift controls, to shirk even the relatively mild denials which rearming requires. The wastefulness of the mobilization and the unfairness with which the burdens of the cold war are being distributed increase the pressures for doing less. This being a presidential election year adds the further lures of playing politics with our national security and of distracting ourselves with domestic quarrels even while a foreign foe relentlessly plots our destruction.

As a result, hardly a week passes without fresh evidence of let-down. Yet who can say now whether a new offensive is not brewing in Korea or along some other front? Tension over Germany mounts, yet the erection of NATO's defenses, scarce begun, is being dragged partly because of our own slow deliveries, partly because of a slackening up by our allies.

Moreover what is done—or not done—today will determine how ready or unready we are 2, 3, and even 5 years from now.

*Cutting the budget*

In taking what seems the easy course at present we could be building up a horrible retribution for the future.

Nor is the decision before us being made any easier by confusing statements which picture us winning the cold war one month and in mortal peril the next.

When the budget now before Congress was submitted early this year, it called for stretching out aircraft production, among other defense items, so that 143 air wings would not be achieved until late 1955 or 1956, instead of mid-1954. When this decision was announced, I protested to our defense heads. Slowing our preparations, I warned, would invite our allies to slow their efforts. Where in the world, I asked, had the risks of aggression been sufficiently reduced to justify such a let-up?

*Ceiling on spending*

Then the House of Representatives imposed a limit on defense expenditures for next year, reducing the budget even further than the Executive already had cut it. This action has brought dire warnings from our highest military leaders. Gen. Omar Bradley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has testified that it is the considered judgment of the Joint Chiefs that 1954 will be the year of maximum peril. By then, he has warned, the Soviet atomic stockpile may be large enough so our superiority in atomic weapons will no longer serve as a sufficient deterrent against possible aggression.

Other military leaders have testified that Russia is producing considerably more jet airplanes than we are. Even after we match their output, the Soviets still will enjoy the advantages of reserves built up over the last years.

*That "calculated risk"*

How are we to reconcile these recent warnings from our highest military leaders with the earlier decision to postpone air readiness? The heads of the defense agencies, testifying before Congress early this year, called the stretch-out "a calculated risk." But was the risk really calculated? By whom? By the Joint Chiefs? If we were acting on the basis of their expressed judgment, the new budget should have called for intensifying, not relaxing, our production effort.

Is it any wonder that the American people are confused when their highest military authority states that we will be lucky if we have more than the next 2 years for preparedness and yet no program for achieving readiness within that time is even advanced?

Is it surprising that Members of Congress should conclude that if building our Air Force can be delayed a year or two why cannot the whole defense program be relaxed proportionately?

*Give public the facts*

May I repeat that I am opposed to the ceiling on defense expenditures, even as I opposed the earlier reduction ordered by the Executive. But I can understand why Congress and the public would be puzzled by the contradiction between the dire estimates of danger given us and the inadequate program put forth to meet that danger.

Are we in peril or not? Your committee will be performing an invaluable public service if you reveal to the American people exactly what is the basis of this so-called "calculated risk" to which we are being asked to expose ourselves and all that we hold dear.



*Have we a plan?*

What does this phrase "calculated risk" mean?

Clearly, it is intended to give the impression of a group of planners, carefully listing all the dangers which threaten, including evaluations of the enemy's preparations and of what our many foreign commitments may lead to. Against that, the planners presumably weigh what would have to be done militarily to counter these risks and what such action would cost in terms of available resources. After full consideration, a balance is struck between the risks we are willing to take and the costs of surmounting these risks.

If that is what is meant by "a calculated risk," then it follows that the defense program should change with the risks. When perils abroad rise, our defense efforts should be speeded. If our rearming is slowed, it should reflect a reduction in danger.

But that is not how things have operated. In the past, we have cut down our defenses even though the risks abroad remained unchanged at best. We have also failed to quicken our defenses despite the most obvious increase in the danger of aggression.

*Year was lost*

For example, when the North Atlantic Defense Treaty first was signed, General Bradley testified that 3 to 5 years would be required to build a minimum defense force in Western Europe, at the rate of rearming then planned. Not many weeks later came the announcement from the White House of an atomic explosion in the Soviet Union. One would have thought that our defense schedules would have been accelerated promptly since, as was asked at the time, "If 5 years was considered a safe timetable before this explosion, how can it be a safe timetable today?"

Actually, little was done to speed our rearming or the defenses of our Western European allies until the invasion of South Korea. A whole year was lost—a year for which we have paid dearly.

If we actually were operating on the basis of "a calculated risk," why wasn't the defense program quickened when our calculations changed, as they must have, with the explosion of an atomic bomb in the Soviet Union?

*Was Korea calculated?*

Similarly, what were the "calculations" behind the slowing of our defense timetable which was decided upon early this year? Was it assumed that we would have a Korean truce by this time? If so, what if we must now increase our forces in Korea? Was the mounting tension over Germany foreseen? Was trouble expected on any other front? Was it realized that our allies would also stretch out their defense schedules slowing the whole defense timetable that much more? Were all these things part of that "calculated risk"?

It is important that your committee give the public the answer to those questions, so the American people will know whether the tempo of rearming is really being changed on the basis of a fully thought through master plan of defense or by the sort of wishful thinking that could believe "peace was never nearer" only a few weeks before the outbreak in Korea.

Is our military program really part of what has been called total diplomacy and which necessitates an over-all global strategy in which military, diplomatic, political, economic, and spiritual factors are

parts of one whole, embracing all the many fronts in the struggle for peace? Or are we still operating by piecemeal patchwork, waiting for the next crisis to hit us? Is anybody trying to formulate such a global strategy?

#### *Sound German policy*

We simply cannot make peace unless we are militarily stronger. Take the issue of Germany. In pressing for her inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization we inevitably quickened all the tensions over Germany. How much further advanced will this struggle for the key to Europe be 3 years from now? Will we be ready militarily?

If Germany remains divided as at present, we must expect an effort to rejoin the partitioned halves sooner or later, perhaps by force. If Germany is "unified" by some Four Power agreement, such a Germany would shiver in constant peril of subversion from within, of subversion likely to be reinforced by the use of Soviet satellite troops from Eastern Europe in the manner of Korea.

To negotiate safely over Germany, we must be certain that an adequate military force is in being (not on paper) in France, the Low Countries, and Britain, which is capable of being thrust into action without delay, to forestall any Soviet coup.

#### *Avoid Soviet trap*

To slow the rearming of Western Europe and at the same time begin negotiations over Germany is to put not one foot but both feet into a Soviet trap.

May I emphasize this because it is so awfully important. Any "solution" sought in Germany will prove worthless unless Western Europe is adequately armed. You simply cannot have a sound German policy until the present disparity in military strength between Soviet Russia and ourselves and our allies is bridged.

The existence of this arms disparity should never be lost sight of. Whatever the assurances from those in high places, let us never be deceived. It can never truly be said that "we are winning the cold war" until this disparity is overcome. We may be able to show gains here and there, important in themselves, but no decisive victory in the cold war is possible as long as the Soviets hold as terrifying an edge in military readiness over the West as they do today. As long as this disparity exists there is no basis for peace in the world.

#### *Weapons not factories*

This disparity is one of actual weapons on hand. It can be filled only by the actual production of our own weapons. It cannot be filled by getting ready to produce or by merely expanding productive capacity.

I am entirely in favor of enlarging our basic capacity in steel, aluminum, copper, electric power, and other segments of the economy. New processes for using low-grade ores should be encouraged along with chemical developments which make us less dependent upon strategic imports from abroad. But additional plant capacity is not what is most critically needed for our defense.

Compare our astonishing productive power demonstrated during the last war—and considerably expanded since—with the productive

capacity of the Soviets who suffered such terrible devastation in the war and whose economy never could provide more than the barest subsistence for its hard-toiling people.

### *Myth of "short notice"*

No; the disparity which menaces us and all the other freedom-loving peoples of the world is not in productive capacity but in the airplanes, ammunition, tanks, and other weapons available for immediate retaliation against aggression or fomented civil war. In increasing our plant capacity we strengthen ourselves where we already are strong. We do not strengthen ourselves where we are most vulnerable.

Nor should we be lulled by assurances that this new productive capacity will be available for arms production on "short notice." How many months does "short notice" mean? Even after these stand-by plants are erected, I doubt that they can be brought to full production within a year and probably longer.

The whole defense program should be reviewed to determine whether too heavy an emphasis has not been placed on building new facilities and too little on turning out weapons.

### *"Obsolescence" a myth*

All sorts of reasons are raised against putting weapons into production. Some have merit. Others should be weighed most carefully against factors which often are overlooked.

Consider the much talked-of matter of "obsolescence." Obviously, we must strive constantly to improve our weapons. But no aggressor was ever stopped by blueprints. What is "obsolete" must also be judged by what the enemy has and by the value of even older weapons in dire emergency.

### *Danger of sabotage*

Who would have thought that our over-age destroyers and stocks of Lee-Enfield rifles could have proven so important to Britain? What would we be doing today without our mothball fleet, air reserves, and ammunition stocks left over from the last war?

If all-out war does come, much of our plant capacity might be destroyed in an atomic blitz. The dangers of sabotage in such a conflict will be greater than during the last war. Reserves of weapons would be priceless insurance against both these risks.

### *Soviet vulnerability*

Then, take a good, long look at Soviet Russia's border. No nation has ever had so extended a frontier. Were Russia to plunge the world into all-out war, she would be open to counter invasion at innumerable points—that is if the peoples along her frontier could be armed quickly. The stocks of weapons we have on hand could be deployed around the globe so as to pin down and immobilize a sizable portion of Russia's own armed strength, if she decided to go to war.

Even during the current stage of undeclared war, the existence of this stockpile of weapons would be an enormous boon to the free peoples of the world. Such weapons would enable us to render swift and possibly effective assistance to any nation threatened by aggression in the future. We could take instant advantage of any opportunity that might arise for arming some ally. We would be prepared if events forced an abrupt increase in our Armed Forces, since men can be recruited more rapidly than munitions.

*To take the initiative*

The struggle for peace is a global one. It cannot be fought successfully if most of our available military strength is required to conduct a holding action on one front. To forestall persistent Soviet aggression, we must be capable of opening other fronts where we can choose the conditions of struggle—where we can take the initiative. The existence of a sizable stock of weapons and ammunition would give us that potential.

Without these weapons we will always be lagging 2 to 3 years behind the need. With these weapons, we would be able to act anywhere in a few months, even weeks. These reserves of weapons would lift our foreign policy from the mire of military weakness and give it a new mobility which would help stabilize the whole world.

In Korea today our position is set by our military power. We are no stronger or weaker diplomatically than the forces we can put into Korea.

*Race for survival*

Tragically unpleasant as it is, we have been forced into an arms race—with our very survival at stake. Do the reports from Russia tell of a let-up in arming? Far from it. Only last February the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe stated that the Soviet Union is making a greater military effort today than in 1940, when the Second World War was already under way. Other reports, some based on official Soviet announcements, have told of tractor factories being shifted to making tanks and of other conversions from civilian to military production.

If true, these reports are warnings we dare not ignore. To convert a factory from tractors to tanks is no easy decision for the Soviet leaders since tractors are a desperate necessity in Russia. That applies with almost equal validity for all of Russia's resources. The Soviets have virtually no "fat" in their economy. When the Kremlin orders resources into armaments it pays a harsh price in terms of living standards, in terms of repairing the devastation of the last war, even in terms of future military strength. Every ton of steel put into armaments is a ton less steel that might go into expanding Russia's basic steel capacity, or building new railroads or drilling new oil wells.

*Kremlin's calculations*

We can be sure that these decisions were not taken without exacting calculations of the prospects of war. The reports of Soviet industrial mobilization do not yet show that the Kremlin is on the verge of precipitating an all-out war. But they do make clear that the Soviets are intensifying—not easing—their war preparations.

I make no pretense at predicting what the Soviets are likely to do. I do know this, that it entails the cruelest exactions from the Russian people for the Soviets to keep as many men under arms and to produce as many airplanes, tanks, and other weapons as they are reported to have. Eventually most of these weapons will be obsolete. But will the Soviet leaders allow those weapons to rust and spoil—considering the cruel price paid for them—or will those weapons be used before they become obsolete?



*We can lose all*

And if a nation, whose people have so little, can devote so much of its resources to arms production, how much less can we afford to do—we who have so much to lose.

How long can we continue to put comforts above survival, to postpone for another year and still another year the small and temporary denials which arms production requires, to lull ourselves with the illusion that we are getting ready to be strong instead of producing the weapons which alone can make us militarily strong? Is it not better to be sure and safe—than sorry?

You gentlemen may not be prepared to accept my own appraisal of the risks ahead. In any case I urge you to cut through the befogging confusion by giving the American people the facts they need to form their own judgment on whether we should be relaxing or intensifying our defensive efforts.

Specifically I recommend—

1. That this committee tell the American people exactly what has happened to the huge sums appropriated for defense, what our actual production of munitions is—not dollar values but actual production figures—and whether we have been getting our money's worth. On what prices are the budget estimates based?

2. That you lay bare the basis of our so-called "calculated risk" so the public can judge whether we are being needlessly exposed to unwarranted danger.

3. That Congress adopt a defense budget which fits the risks we face. Cut the budget where you can with safety—not where it will imperil our security.

4. That you consider whether the risks ahead do not justify ordering the expansion of our Air Force to 143 wings without any stretch-out.

5. That you consider whether these risks do not justify stepping up other munitions schedules sufficiently to provide a sizable reserve of weapons, considerably in excess of our own troop requirements.

6. That Congress undertake a detailed study of the whole program of plant expansion to determine how much of it represents a real contribution to security and whether it is worth the price in taxes and other resources as against the added security which a greater output of weapons would furnish.

*Get production targets*

7. That Congress insist that the defense agencies reduce the arms program to specific production targets—both in quantities and time—and that all mobilization controls be adjusted to insure these goals being met.

8. That the President be granted every necessary power to carry through this program, including price and priority controls.

9. But, at the same time, that Congress strengthen its committees dealing with defense by equipping them with an adequate staff, vigorously led, and capable of regaining control over the budget for Congress.

10. That your committee obtain from the military a single, unified strategy, covering the whole Defense Establishment, and

which is part of an over-all, global strategy which integrates our own defense efforts with what our allies can do.

#### *What economy can stand*

In making these recommendations I appreciate that both in this country and among our allies the prevailing mood appears to incline toward doing less. Nor would I want to leave the impression that I do not appreciate the justifiable concern of those who are worried over how long we can continue to spend such huge sums on defense without wrecking our economy.

Once the gap between our own defenses and Soviet military strength is overcome, we should be able to relax somewhat, provided always that we continue to pace ourselves in relation to what the Soviets are doing and the risks of war. But to let up now is unsound strategically and economically. Before peace can become possible, this gap in military readiness will have to be overcome. The longer we stretch things out, the more costly it will prove in the end.

#### *Getting our money's worth*

Since the outbreak in Korea more than \$100 billion have been appropriated for defense—an enormous sum. Why has it produced proportionately so little in the way of actual weapons?

What blame are we to lay to the failure to use the available powers to prevent inflation? As you know, as soon as the military began placing contracts, prices were allowed to run away from them. This made more difficult a task difficult at best. No industry has ever been called upon to spend such immense sums so quickly—and, at the same time, to be denied the necessary controls.

The armed services do need a driving production authority of their own—of the caliber of the late William Knudsen—to see that orders are properly placed and followed up—vigorously, constantly. The services also need a clear-cut point of decision to determine when designs are to be frozen and weapons put into production. Changes in design are costly both in time and dollars. Some clearly designated person must decide when to stop improving and start producing.

#### *Control of budget lost*

The Secretary of Defense has been struggling manfully—and making progress—with these and other problems. You can help him best not by imposing some dollar limit on defense expenditures but by making your own thorough study of what is wrong. To regain control of the military budget—which you must do—Congress must become as well informed on these matters as the executive agencies. As was recommended by the Hoover Commission, you need a greatly expanded permanent staff, vigorously directed, and which can work with the Defense Department through every step of the budgetary process. Go beyond the mere requests for money to how the appropriations are actually being spent, and even into such basic problems of military organization as to why so large an overhead is required in relation to the forces actually fighting. Other nations get more fighting power for the same resources than we do. Why?

You might take a whole year or more for such a study. We will be at the business of defense for a long time, I fear, and no matter how long it takes, if you do the job at least once in full intensity, the knowledge acquired will yield astounding savings and improvements in efficiency.

*Liberties above money*

The surgeon puts his knife to the diseased spot. In cutting the military budget you must be equally judicious in applying the scalpel so that it helps—not hurts—our security. If we spend a little too much money, we can recover. If we lose our freedom, we can never recover it.

One discipline you might impose is to require the military to justify their budget requests according to a scale of priorities—which items are of most vital importance, which next in importance and so on down the list. These priorities, in turn, should reflect a truly unified military plan in which the missions entrusted each service are parts of one integrated whole. We cannot get our money's worth in defense if appropriations are parceled out among the services by some "balanced" percentage allocation.

*Bad mobilization*

No one could be more concerned over the necessity of maintaining a healthy economy, even while arming. However, the main threat to our economy since Korea has not lain in the size of the defense program. The inflationary havoc we have suffered has been mainly the result of the failure to mobilize properly.

Because we were undertaking only a "partial" mobilization in the military sense, those in responsibility reasoned that "partial," piecemeal controls were all that were needed. Although there was little or no slack in our economy, the mobilizing authorities seemed to think that several million men could be drawn into the Army and unknown but large amounts of matériel taken from the regular market without serious disturbance. They ignored the clear lesson of both world wars that a full set of mobilization controls must be imposed over the whole economy at the very outset of the emergency.

Congress actually passed the necessary legislation for such an across-the-economy program. But these powers were not used for months during which living costs soared, all savings were cheapened, and the real purchasing power of every defense dollar was slashed by one-fifth.

*Twenty billions wasted*

This needless inflation already has cost us \$12 billions in higher costs of defense and is likely to exact another \$10 billions in needless tribute over the next fiscal year. These sums are far in excess of what it would cost to continue with the original aircraft production program. These sums are far in excess of the economies which might be realized under the limitations proposed by the House of Representatives.

In other words, had a proper mobilization been undertaken at the outset, we could press ahead today with a greater defense effort at less cost than the weaker effort now proposed. Under the program which was adopted, we have gotten neither adequate security, nor a healthy economy.

*No politics as usual*

We still can step up our defense program and avoid further inflation by reducing all unnecessary and postponable expenditures—Senators Byrd and Douglas and others in Congress have been waging a courageous fight on this score—by, I repeat, cutting out all unnecessary and postponable expenditures, by imposing the necessary controls

and accepting the temporary denials and disciplines which would be entailed. Of course, we cannot rearm to the extent that our security requires, if we persist in profits as usual, social reforms as usual, and politics as usual.

We have the highest living standards in the world and, like you, I would like to see them enlarged. Increased living standards no longer mean bread alone, but better housing, better clothing, hygiene, medical care, education, transportation, and amusement. But all these things become mere ashes in our mouths if we lack the means with which to defend them. While we struggle to survive, actual needs not postponable wants must have first call.

#### *First things first*

Our economy can do all that our security requires—and more—provided there is the will to do so and the courage of administration to channel our resources from less essential to more essential activities and to share the costs of the struggle equitably.

Today the main burdens of the cold war are being borne by the few whose loved ones are at the fighting fronts and by those who do not have a pressure group to represent them in the race of selfishness that is tearing the Nation apart.

Our problem is to find a substitute for the disciplines which war brings. If we are to be able to avoid war, we must be able to discipline ourselves so we can mobilize our strength in time to prevent the shooting and bombing from starting.

#### *Discipline of urgency*

Because self-discipline is the test of national survival, it will not suffice to say merely that we should follow a "middle course" between arming for all-out war and doing nothing. How are we to adjust this "middle course" to changing conditions. Are we to do it at random and by wishful thinking? Or are we to do it by facing up to our best calculations of the risks which threaten, drawing up a worked-out plan to surmount these risks and organizing ourselves to see it through?

Without a sense of disciplined urgency, the whole mobilization may fall to pieces. Bear in mind that the synchronizing force of any mobilization is the priority power—the decision as to what must come first, second, third, and so on. To determine what production should be held back so more essential production can be speeded one must know what quantities of weapons are needed by when. We must set ourselves to attain these production goals with the same urgency as if we were at war.

If it makes little difference whether planes are produced next year or the year after, why deprive some civilian industry of scarce materials? Why stop research on a new weapon to get it into production? Why hurry to make deliveries to our allies?

When you live under the shadow of war, as we do today, all actions must be valued in terms of time. It is time which our young men fighting in Korea have been buying for us. If their sacrifices are not to prove in vain, we must know exactly what we propose to do with that time. We must organize ourselves so that first things come first through our entire economy, through everything we do. That is our responsibility to our men in Korea, in Europe, and other fronts.



*This is the issue*

In conclusion, may I state what I consider to be the real and crucial issue before this committee, before the whole Congress, before all of the people? Our highest military authorities have stated, unequivocally, that from now through 1954 will be the period of maximum peril for this Nation. Yet we deliberately are doing less than we can do to achieve readiness by that date.

Nowhere have I seen any justifiable reason offered for such recklessness, particularly since it would cost so little in temporary denials to make our safety secure. I believe it is the responsibility of this committee—and it is a very grave responsibility—to give the American people the facts of our defense situation, without fear or favor, without regard to politics or wishful thinking or to cover up past mistakes—give the people the facts they need to know so they can demand a defense program which will mobilize our strength in time to prevent further aggression.

We must strengthen ourselves militarily if we are to succeed in our objective of preventing a third world war and building and keeping a lasting peace.



This is the peace.

In conclusion, may I state what I consider to be the real and crucial issue before this committee before the whole Congress, before all of the people? Our highest military authorities have stated, unequivocally, that from now through 1954 will be the period of maximum peril for the Nation. If we believe they are doing less than we can do to achieve victory by that date.

Now, may I state any justifiable reason offered for such reluctance, particularly since it would cost so little in temporary delays to make our early action? I believe it is the responsibility of this committee—and it is a very grave responsibility—to give the American people the facts of our defense situation without fear or favor, without regard to politics or selfish thinking or to cover up past mistakes—give the people the facts they need to know so they can demand a better program which will mobilize our strength in time to prevent further aggression.

We must reexamine ourselves critically if we are to succeed in our objective of creating a third world war and ending and keeping a lasting peace.